



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 6, 2005

Shana Jones, Special Assistant
Daryl Fields, Public Affairs Officer
610 N.W. Loop 410
San Antonio, Texas 78216
(210) 384-7440

FORMER STUDENT SENTENCED FOR HACKING INTO U.T. COMPUTER SYSTEM

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced today that in Austin, Christopher Andrew Phillips was sentenced to five years probation and ordered to pay \$170,056 restitution for accessing protected computers without authorization, a.k.a. computer hacking, and possession of stolen Social Security numbers. In addition to the standard conditions of probation, United States District Judge Lee Yeakel ordered that Phillips cannot access the internet except under the pre-approval and supervision of his probation officer and only for purposes directly related to school or work. Failure to adhere to the conditions will be grounds for probation revocation and potential incarceration.

"Computer hacking is a serious crime. Mr. Phillips is now a convicted felon and owes over \$170,000 to the University of Texas for the damage that he caused. Today, he found out the hard way that breaking into someone else's computer is not a joke," stated United States Attorney Johnny Sutton.

On June 10, 2005, a jury found that in January, February and April 2002, Phillips attempted to breach the security of hundreds of computer systems including the University of Texas' web-based computer system. University officials and others detected Phillips' actions and University officials subsequently warned him not to further attempt to breach any computer security system. Phillips testified at trial that he considered these warnings "just slaps on the wrist" that did not dissuade him from continuing to break into other computer systems. On January 30, 2003, Phillips created a new computer program to breach the security of or "hack into" a protected University of Texas computer system that he did not have authorized access to in order to discover the names and social security numbers of individuals in the UT computer system. He subsequently used this computer program to steal over 37,000 names and social security numbers of individuals in the University of Texas computers via the TXCLASS system. In doing this, he caused massive failures that shut down the TXCLASS computer system as well as the UT system's web-based server and all of its applications. Previously, in 2002, Phillips was successful in stealing approximately 8,000 names and Social Security numbers from the University's system. As a result of these damages, the University suffered losses of approximately \$122,000 and another \$60,000 in losses was incurred by UT to warn individuals whose names and social security numbers were stolen by Phillips about potential identity theft.

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Testimony during the trial also revealed that in October and November 2002, Phillips downloaded biographical data from an Internet Web site providing genealogical information of individuals born during the years 1940 to 1984 including name, date of birth, gender, father's name, mother's maiden name, and place of birth of the ten most populous Texas counties. Phillips admitted that he was going to merge the genealogical data with the stolen information from the UT system to create a single data base. Because the United States Secret Service acted so quickly on the information received about Phillips' break-in – nine hours from first notification to execution of search warrants on Phillips' computers – Phillips did not have time to merge the genealogical data with the stolen information from the UT system to create a single a single data base. Phillips was acquitted on two counts of possession of more than 15 access devices with the intent to defraud.

This case was investigated by the United States Secret Service and the University of Texas ITS Information Security Office. Assistant United States Attorneys Mark Roomberg and Don Calvert prosecuted this case on behalf of the Government.

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